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The IdeaBridge White Paper Series:
The Leadership Series:
Communication

THE LEADERSHIP SERIES: COMMUNICATION

Summary

Leaders are called upon to play many roles in the management of an organization or team. The Leader as the 'Chief Communicator' is one of the most important roles every aspiring Leader must learn. Often, one's ability to clearly communicate will determine their ultimate success more than nearly any other attribute.

- What separates the great Leaders from others is that they have truly learned the art of listening. Ask questions and listen with interest. Good Leaders not only ask questions, but they really listen to the answers. Do you? Learn the power of silence. Listen!
- Nail down everyone's responsibilities with clarity and precision. Anything that can be misunderstood, will be. It's often a good idea to have someone repeat back to you their understanding of the assignment or objective; it's great insurance against foul-ups and surprises!
- A dream-team coach constantly communicates the game plan. He's got a plan not only for each individual game, but a plan for the development of the whole team over the course of the current and upcoming seasons. Once the game plan has been drawn up, he then communicates it to his team on an a continual basis. Where's your game plan? When was the last time you showed it to your team?
- Always keep in mind that what others tell you is only the tip of the iceberg. Inquire further. Oftentimes the real answer is several layers below the initial response. Keep probing further and try to discover the "core" problem.
- Without the ability to communicate, a Leader cannot effectively cast his vision and call his people to act on that vision. Great Leaders are articulate...Are you?
- A Leader understands that the boss needs to be kept informed, and never wants to be embarrassed or surprised.
- A Leader is not capable of reaching her potential without effective communications skills.
- Listen to feedback carefully and avoid being defensive. Leaders must always work to develop and enhance their skills at remaining totally objective.
- Ask your associates, "What would you do?" This helps them grow and also shows them that you care about their opinions.
- Leaders follow-up verbal communications with written communications so that there are no misunderstandings.
- A good communicator has the ability to set a person at ease. She can find a way to relate to nearly anyone of any background, regardless of social status, title or position within the organization.
- The fastest way to open the lines of communication is to smile. A smile overcomes innumerable communications barriers, crossing the boundaries of culture, race, age, class, gender, education, and economic status.

- When employees feel that their opinions are valued, they develop a sense of ownership in achieving company goals; this kind of “ownership” cannot be bought at any price...it must be earned through respectful listening.

- In business, most of the market intelligence and answers to many problems is often several layers below top management. Often the receptionists and administrative staff hear more about what’s going on than management does. When was the last time you took your assistant or other clerical person out for a one-on-one lunch or for coffee? Elicit their input often.

- The most successful CEOs display a relentless desire to make certain that they are provided information that is balanced and of the highest quality. At their companies, no one is ever shot for bearing bad news; that risk is reserved for those who knowingly bring false cheer or no news at all, or repeatedly fail to measure up to a high and uniformly applied standard of competence.

- Often, non-verbal communication is more powerful than anything that's said verbally. True Leaders understand this and can maintain a calm, internal confidence because they have worked hard, prepared for the tough moment, and have built on the successes of the past. In fact, Leaders must appear confident at all times, especially when the pressure is on. For if a Leader appears weak, frightened and vulnerable, even without uttering a word, his team will be paralyzed into inactivity while they huddle and try to discern what's going on and how it may impact them personally.